

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 14746

EXDIS

FOR NEA/ARN AND AMB GODLEY

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR US LE

SUBJECT: DIB PUBLIC STATEMENT RE HIS CONVERSATION WITH AMB
GODLEY ON EVE PRES. FRANGIE'S DEPARTURE FOR NEW YORK

1. BOUTROS DIB, DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF PRESIDENCY,
ISSUED PUBLIC STATEMENT ON US-LEBANESE RELATIONS
DEC 9, KEY PORTIONS OF WHICH FOLLOW:

"SEVERAL CONSIDERATINS HAVE MOTIVATED US
UNTIL NOW TO NOT DIVULGE MANY DETAILS ABOUT
THIS AFFAIR (I.E., PRES. FRANGIE'S RECEPTION
IN NEW YORK). HOWEVER, IN FACE OF THE NUMEROUS
VERSIONS, FOR THE MOST PART FALSE, AND OF THE
VARIOUS INTERPRETATIONS AND COMMENTARIES, WE
MUST PLACE THINGS IN THEIR PERSPECTIVE:

"ON THE EVE OF DEPARTURE OF LEBANESE DEL.
FOR UN, AMERICAN AMB. GODLEY ASKED TO SEE ME. UPON
ARRIVAL, HE INFORMED ME OF CERTAIN RUMORS BEING PEDDLED
IN THE COUNTRY TO EFFECT THAT QUANTITY OF HASHISH WOULD
BE IN CERTAIN SUITCASES. I WAS SURPRISED, AND I TOLD
HIM 'I AM SORRY TO SEE YOU GIVING CREDENCE TO THIS
TYPE OF RUMOR. I HOPE THAT INFORMATION YOU NORMALLY
RECIEVE IS NOT OF SUCH (POOR) QUALITY. IN ANY CASE,
THERE IS NO QUESTIONOF DISCUSSING SUCH A STORY.' IT
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WAS ENTIRELY NATURAL THAT I SAID THIS. MOREOVER, ANY

CITIZEN WOULD HAVE HAD SAME ATTITUDE IN ORDER TO PRESERVE HONOR AND DIGNITY OF HIS COUNTRY.

"AMBASSADOR GODLEY REPLIED: ' I WAS CERTAIN, MYSELF, THAT THE RUMOR HAD NO BASIS. NEEDLESS TO SAY, THE SUITCASES WILL NOT BE SEARCHED AT NEW YORK. HOWEVER, AS FRIEND OF LEBANON; I MUST DRAW YOUR ATTENTION TO A MORE SERIOUS MATTER RELATING TO THE DELEGATION' SECURITY. YOU MUST ASSURE YOURSELVES THAT THERE ARE NO BOMBS OR EXPLOSIVES ON THE AIRCRAFT. WE REGULARLY DO THIS IN US BEFORE THE TRIP OF EVERY HIGH-RANKING AMERICAN. WE CHECK HIS LUGGAGE FOR FEAR OF EXPLOSIVES. I AM SURE, ALSO THAT YOU HAVE TAKEN NECESSARY PRECAUTIONS....'

"I (DIB) ANSWERED: THIS MATTER, THAT OF EXPLOSIVES, DESERVES ALL OUR ATTENTION. PRIOR TO ANY TRIP TAKEN BY THE PRESIDENT, WE TAKE NECESSARY PRECAUTIONARY MEASURES. IT WAS IN THIS REGARD THAT I CONTACTED COL. JULES BOUSTANI (LEB ARMY G-2) IN ORDER THAT THE SECURITY MEASURES BE TIGHTENED. AT THIS POINT IN THE CONVERSATION WITH THE AMB, I DISCUSSED SUBJECTS RELATING TO WORLD AND MIDDLE EASTERN POLITICS.

"THIS IS WHY THE EXAMINATION OF THE SUITCASES IN NEW YORK WAS, FOR US, A TOTAL SURPRISE. MEANWHILE, AN INQUIRY IS IN PROGRESS TO DISCOVER THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS INCIDENT. IN ADDITION, AN INVESTIGATION CONTINUES IN LEBANON AND ABROAD TO UNCOVER THE SOURCES OF THIS INSIDIOUS INFORMATION, SPREAD SPECIALLY ON THE OCCASION OF THE HISTORIC JOURNEY OF THE PRESIDENT TO NEW YORK."

2. COMMENT: MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS TELEPHONED DEC 10 TO ASSURE ME THAT THE STATEMENT WAS MEANT TO BE HELPFUL AND WAS IN NO WAY INTENDED TO BE INJURIOUS TO EITHER THE US OR TO AMBASSADOR GODLEY. HE MAINTAINED THAT THE STATEMENT WAS IN RESPONSE TO "GOSSIP AND RUMORS" CONCERNING THE GOVERNMENT AND PARTICULARLY DIB'S HANDLING OF THE PROBLEM. THE IDEA WAS TO DEFUSE AND STOP THE ATTACKS BY GIVING "THE FACTS". HE ENDED BY EMPHASIZING THAT DIB'S ACTION WAS AN EFFORT TO EASE OUR PROBLEM

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AND NOT TO WORSEN IT.

3. ALTHOUGH DIB'S EXONERATED HIMSELF AND TOOK LIBERTIES WITH THE TRUTH IN HIS STATEMENT, THE FOREIGN MINISTER'S EXPLANATION OF THE BACKGROUND OF THE STATEMENT IS ACCURATE. DESPITE MY EFFORTS TO PERSUADE HIM TO DROP THE SUBJECT OF THE INCIDENT, RAYMOND EDDE HAS CONTINUED TO ATTACK THE GOVERNMENT'S HANDLING OF THE PROBLEM AND

IT WAS LARGELY HE WHO CREATED THE SITUATION IN WHICH
DIB FELT COMPELLED TO RESPOND.
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